

determining whether the probe sterilization indicator is present; and  
conditionally operating the medical probe based on a presence of the sterilization indicator.

44. (New) The method of claim 43, wherein the conditional operation of the medical probe comprises preventing operation of the medical probe if the sterilization indicator is present.

45. (New) The method of claim 43, wherein the conditional operation of the medical probe comprises allowing operation of the medical probe if the sterilization indicator is absent.

46. (New) The method of claim 43, wherein a presence of the probe sterilization indicator is determined when the medical probe is connected to a control unit.

47. (New) The method of claim 43, further comprising:  
electronically storing a probe usage indicator in the medical probe if the medical probe is operated; and  
conditionally operating the medical probe based further on a presence of the probe usage indicator.

48. (New) The method of claim 47, wherein operation of the medical probe is prevented if the probe sterilization indicator and the probe usage indicator are present.

49. (New) The method of claim 47, wherein operation of the medical probe is prevented if the probe sterilization indicator and the probe usage indicator are present.

50. (New) The method of claim 47, wherein operation of the medical probe is allowed if the probe sterilization indicator is present and the probe usage indicator is absent.

51. (New) The method of claim 47, wherein operation of the medical probe is allowed, the probe sterilization indicator is cleared from the medical probe, and the usage indicator is stored in

the medical probe if the probe sterilization indicator is present and the probe usage indicator is absent.

52. (New) The method of claim 47, wherein operation of the medical probe is allowed if the probe sterilization indicator is absent and the probe usage indicator is present.

53. (New) A control unit for connection to a medical probe, the medical probe having electronic storage componentry, the control unit comprising:

control circuitry configured to electrically couple to the electronic storage componentry for reading data from the electronic storage componentry, and for conditionally operating the medical probe based on a presence of a probe sterilization indicator in the data.

54. (New) The control unit of claim 53, wherein the control circuitry prevents operation of the medical probe if the probe sterilization indicator is present.

55. (New) The control unit of claim 53, wherein the control circuitry allows operation of the medical probe if the probe sterilization indicator is absent.

56. (New) The control unit of claim 53, wherein the control circuitry conditionally operates the medical probe based further on a presence of a probe usage indicator.

57. (New) The control unit of claim 56, wherein the control circuitry prevents operation of the medical probe if the probe sterilization indicator and the probe usage indicator are present.

58. (New) The control unit of claim 56, wherein the control circuitry prevents operation of the medical probe if the probe sterilization indicator and the probe usage indicator are present.

59. (New) The control unit of claim 56, wherein the control circuitry allows operation of the medical probe if the probe sterilization indicator is present and the probe usage indicator is absent.

60. (New) The control unit of claim 56, wherein the control circuitry allows operation of the medical probe, clears the probe sterilization indicator from the medical probe, and stores the usage indicator in the medical probe if the probe sterilization indicator is present and the probe usage indicator is absent.

61. (New) The control unit of claim 56, wherein the control circuitry allows operation of the medical probe if the probe sterilization indicator is absent and the probe usage indicator is present.

62. (New) The control unit of claim 53, further comprising:  
an RF power source; and  
an interlocking device electrically coupled between the RF power source and the control circuitry.